



Open Access: Swiss National Strategy

In December 2015 the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) commissioned swissuniversities to elaborate a national strategy for Open Access (OA) with the support of the Swiss National Science Foundation.

Why does Switzerland need an Open Access strategy?

Open Science describes a scientific culture that is characterised by its openness and by the way researchers work, collaborate, interact, share and disseminate results. The practices of Open Science, in particular Open Access to scholarly publications, reflect the fact that publicly funded research results are a public good which can only be fully exploited if everyone has free access without any restrictions. Over the last few decades, subscription costs have soared and profit-oriented publishing houses have played a dominant role in the publication and dissemination of scientific works. As a consequence, most of the publicly funded and published research results are locked behind a paywall. All over the world, Open Access (OA) initiatives offer a chance of providing broad-based free access to research results, bringing research back to the scientists and to the public that funds it.

Studies have emphasised that OA is associated with higher visibility of research results, knowledge transfer, research efficiency, good scientific practice, media attention, potential collaborations, new job and funding opportunities and accelerated scientific progress, as well as support for movements such as citizen science.

A full transition to OA has the potential to positively contribute to Switzerland's prosperity, which is mainly built on high-quality education, research and innovation. It has a big impact not only on knowledge-intensive professions such as medicine, teaching, and journalism, but also on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Information – innovation – growth is a well-established principle in economics and Open Access boosts the availability of information.

Vision

By 2024, all scholarly publication activity in Switzerland should be OA, all scholarly publications funded by public money must be freely accessible on the internet.

How can Open Access be implemented?

The most common roads to Open Access are:

Green OA: archiving research results in freely accessible repositories: pre-prints, post-prints or publisher versions

Gold OA: the original and first publication is OA, for instance in an OA journal or as an OA book or other OA work. Either the publisher charges Article Processing Charges (APCs) and the author pays (Gold OA) or the APCs are entirely financed by non-profit organisations such as research funders, societies or universities (Platinum or Diamond OA).

Hybrid OA: publishing in subscription-based journals allowing OA to individual articles in exchange for additional payment of an APC.

There are many other OA models. The present unsatisfactory situation has in fact encouraged new and innovative forms of publishing supported by professional organisations or interested funders.

Guiding Principles

1. **Powerful and unified approach:** All stakeholders, politicians, higher education institutions (and their libraries) and funders have to join forces to pursue the common goal of OA. Options for international collaboration should also be considered.
2. **Support and commitment from research communities:** The OA commitment and awareness of research communities are essential for the envisioned transition.
3. **Cost transparency and cost neutrality:** OA should not lead to higher publication costs (cost neutrality) for Switzerland as a whole, although there will be additional costs in the transition phase.
4. **Ascertaining control and diversity of the scientific production process:** The present market concentration and price increases are a major obstacle to fair, open, efficient and financially sustainable publishing activities. This situation calls for a multi-pronged strategy. New and promising forms of publishing must be encouraged.
5. **Revision of quality assessment system:** Many current academic assessment systems depend heavily on a few journals, they are largely considered to be inaccurate and limited. Since evaluation processes and reputation gain play an important role for publishing decisions, the criteria on which they are based should include Open Access.

To achieve this vision outlined above, Swiss universities and higher education institutions, research institutions, research funders and science policy-makers agree on the following action items:

1. Adopting and aligning Open Access policies
2. Negotiations with publishers
3. Coordinating and pooling resources
4. Alternative forms of publishing
5. Communicating and raising awareness
6. Supportive regulatory framework
7. National monitoring



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